

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
/076 W

-----056724 190920Z /12

P 190744Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9461
COMIDEASTFOR PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
CNO WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
CINUSNAVEUR LONDON UK
CINCPAC HONOLULU
CINCPACFLT PERARL HARBOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 3655

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, OCLR, SU, ET, US
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
US NAVAL SHIP VISITS TO PORT SUDAN AND ALLEGED CAMPAIGN
BY PRES. NIMEIRI TO DESTABILIZE HORN OF AFRICA.

REF: COMIDEASTFOR MSG DTG 031810Z AUG 78

SUMMARY: ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT HAS EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT RECENT
US NAVAL SHIP VISITS TO PORT SUDAN MAY BE RELATED TO SITUATION
IN ERITREA. FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL WAS ASSURED BY AMB-
ASSADOR THAT ANY SUCH VISITS ARE PURELY ROUTINE AND URGED
THAT ETHIOPIA PERMIT ROUTINE VISIT TO ASSAB IN OCTOBER SO
BOTH OUR COUNTRIES CAN DEMONSTRATE NORMAL, PEACEFUL RELATIONS
EXIST BETWEEN US. ETHIOPIAN DEMARCHE IS JUST MORE EVIDENCE
THAT THERE ARE MANY ELEMENTS IN ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT WHO WILL
LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED TO COMPLICATE ANY IMPROVEMENT IN
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RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. IMMEDIATE NOTAL SEPTEL ON ANOTHER SUBJECT REPORTED 18
AUGUST THAT MOFA AMERICAS DIVISION DIRECTOR BERHANE DERESSE,
ON INSTRUCTIONS OF FOREIGN MINISTER FELEKE, HAD ALSO RAISED
SUBJECT OF RECENT US NAVAL SHIP VISITS TO PORT SUDAN WITH
AMBASSADOR.

2. BERHANE SAID ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT (PMGSE) HAD INFORMATION THAT TWO AMERICAN WARSHIPS HAD ABOUT AUGUST 10 VISITED PORT SUDAN AND THAT ADDITIONAL ONES WOULD BE VISITING THERE SOON. HE IMMEDIATELY MOVED TO POINT OF HIS DEMARCHE: CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VISITS TO PORT SUDAN AND ETHIOPIAN EFFORTS TO REESTABLISH SECURITY, PEACE AND "LAW AND ORDER" IN ERITREA. NONE OF THESE EFFORTS ARE AIMED AT ANY OF ETHIOPIA'S NEIGHBORS, HE SAID. HE HOPED USG WOULD UNDERSTAND THAT POINT AND NOT BE DRAWN IN ON SIDE OF SUDAN AND "OTHER HOSTILE NEIGHBORS," OR THAT SHIP VISITS HAD ANY RELATIONSHIP WHATSOEVER TO SECURITY SITUATION IN OR NEAR ERITREA.

3. AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT FOLLOW WHEREABOUTS OF US NAVAL VESSELS, PARTICULARLY WHEN ETHIOPIA WAS NOT CONCERNED, BUT THAT HE WAS SURE THESE WERE ROUTINE VISITS, IF INDEED THEY HAD TAKEN PLACE. (REFTEL, RETRIEVED FROM FILES FOLLOWING MEETING AT MOFA, WOULD SEEM TO CONFIRM THAT MUL-LINNIX AND VREELAND DID MAKE VISIT. WE ARE NOT SURE WHAT ACRONYM TOVR IN REFTEL MEANS AND WOULD APPRECIATE CLARIFICATION FROM COMIDEASTFOR.) AMERICAN NAVAL VESSELS ROUTINELY TRANSIT INTERNATIONAL WATERS, INCLUDING RED SEA, AND, OF COURSE, NEED REFUELING FROM TIME TO TIME. PORT SUDAN IS ONLY PORT IN SUDAN, AND ASSAB HAS BEEN CLOSED TO US FOR A LONG TIME SO QUITE LOGICAL U.S. NAVAL VESSELS STOPPED THERE FOR

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ROUTINE REFUELING.

4. AMBASSADOR REMINDED BERHANE AT THIS POINT THAT EMBASSY HAS ASKED AUTHORIZATION FOR ROUTINE VREELAND VISIT FOR PURPOSE OF REFUELING IN EARLY OCTOBER. SUCH VISITS ALSO SYMBOLIZE FRIENDSHIP FOR AND ARE RECOGNITION OF SOVEREIGNTY OF HOST. PMGSE SHOULD NOT INTERPRET VISITS TO PORT SUDAN AS HAVING ANYTHING TO DO WITH US POLICY ON ERITREA. AMBASSADOR RECALLED THAT HE HAD TOLD CHAIRMAN MENGISTU, FOREIGN MINISTER FELEKE AND MOFA PERMSEC DAWIT THAT US HAS FOR MANY YEARS RECOGNIZED -- AND CONTINUES TO DO SO -- THAT ERITREA IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF ETHIOPIA. NEVER HAS THE US SUPPORTED DISSIDENTS IN ERITREA IN ANY WAY WHATSOEVER. ANY LINKAGE BETWEEN PORT VISIT AND SITUATION IN ERITREA WOULD BE FANTASTIC.

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5. BERHANE THEN RENEWED ETHIOPIAN LITANY, WHICH HAS BEEN MUTED LATELY, OF CHARGES AGAINST PRESIDENT NIMEIRI. AS A RESULT OF RECENT ETHIOPIAN MILITARY SUCCESSES IN ERITREA, NIMEIRI HAS AGAIN LAUNCHED HIS CAMPAIGN OF VILLIFICATION OF ETHIOPIA AND HAS ACCUSED ETHIOPIA OF AGGRESSIVE MEASURES. SUDAN ALONE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE AGGRAVATION IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. NIMEIRI IS THE ENEMY OF ETHIOPIAN UNITY AS EVIDENCED BY FACT HE CONTINUES TO ALLOW ARMS AND OTHER WAR MATERIAL TO TRANSIT HIS COUNTRY. EARLY IN ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION, NIMEIRI ACTUALLY HAD FORCES MAKE ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENTS AGAINST ETHIOPIAN SOIL. HOWEVER, HIS EFFORTS TO DESTABILIZE ETHIOPIA ARE FAILING AND ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT URGES USG NOT TO SUPPORT HIS ACTIONS AGAINST ETHIOPIA IN ANY WAY.

6. AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT USG, OF COURSE, DEPLORES ANY CAMPAIGN OF VILLIFICATION OF ONE COUNTRY AGAINST ANOTHER
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OR ANY OTHER MEASURES CONTRIBUTING TO TENSIONS IN AREAS AS IMPORTANT AS HORN OF AFRICA. OBVIOUSLY DID NOT WISH TO GO INTO MERIT OF ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING THE CHIEF OF STATE OF ANOTHER FRIENDLY COUNTRY. A SHIP VISIT TO PORT OF ASSAB IN ETHIOPIA, IF PERMITTED, WOULD DEMONSTRATE TO ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES HOW UNEVENTFUL AND PEACEFUL THEY ARE.

7. BERHANE THANKED AMBASSADOR FOR HIS INITIAL EXPLANATION AND PROMISED TO RELAY IT TO MINISTER. EMBASSY PLANS TO INFORM BERHANE'S OFFICE IN MOST ROUTINE MATTER THAT VISITS DID TAKE PLACE. (ACTION REQUESTED: PLEASE CONFIRM.)

8. AS POINTED OUT SEPTEL, THIS AND ANOTHER MATTER WERE ONLY LEAD-INS TO MORE IMPORTANT DISCUSSION. THEY DO, HOWEVER, DEMONSTRATE THAT THERE ARE STILL THOSE IN PMGSE -- AND IN THIS CASE IT IS FOREIGN MINISTER FELEKE -- WHO ARE DETERMINED TO FIND ANY EXCUSE TO POISON RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES.
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